

## Effective Court Reports - The Five “B”s

1. Be prepared.
2. Be professional.
3. Be organized.
4. Be honest.
5. Be an advocate for your CASA child.

### **REPORT WRITING SUGGESTIONS**

#### **If writing about Agency Involvement:**

- . How did the agency become involved with the family?
- . What are the issues that need to be resolved?
- . What factors led to the child's placement from the agency perspective?
- . What efforts have been made to place the child with extended family?
- . How often does the caseworker see the child? The parents?
- . What is the plan for the child?
- . What services have been provided or are needed?
- . How has the family used the services that have been provided?
- . What are the current visitation arrangements?
- . What is the agency recommendation regarding the pending petition?
- . Is there a concurrent plan? If so, what? If not, is one needed?

#### **If writing about Parents:**

- . Name, birthdate, address
- . How would each parent describe the child?
- . What is the parents' understanding of why their child is in foster care?
- . What do the parents want to happen?
- . What are the current visitation arrangements?
- . What services have been provided to the parents?
- . What other services do they need?
- . What is the parents' understanding of the case plan?
- . What are the parents' plans for their child?
- . Describe family and other relationships. What support systems are available?
- . Who else is important to the child?
- . Describe current living arrangements and source of income

**If writing about the Child:**

- . Name, birthdate, placement
- . Describe history of caregivers
- . What is the child's understanding of why *s/he* is in foster care?
- . What does the child think needs to happen in the family?
- . Who are the significant others in the child's life?
- . How does everyone get along from the child's perspective?
- . How does the child feel about the current situation? What does *s/he* want?
- . Describe the child's interests, friends, school situation, health, demeanor, etc.
- . Is there anything that the child is particularly concerned about?
- . How does the child feel about the current visitation arrangements?
- . What does the child want you to tell the judge?

**PROOFREADING & EDITING****Setting the stage**

Work when at your best-most "alert"  
Remove distractions  
Keep important references handy  
Sit comfortably with adequate lighting  
proofreading

**Proofreading "musts"**

Accuracy is a priority  
Plan to read at least 3 times  
Read numbers out loud  
Put time between writing and

**QUICK TIPS****Errors are often found**

Near beginnings or endings of lines  
In proper nouns  
In long words  
Near the bottom of a page  
In number combinations

**Watch for these mistakes**

Doubling small words (if, in, as, by, be)  
Omission of one of a pair of doubled letters  
Substitution of one small word for another  
Transposing words within a sentence  
Transposing letters within a word

**Tips for proofing names and numbers**

Never assume a number is typed correctly  
Read once through just to look at numbers  
Read through once just to look at names

Check for possible alternate spellings of names  
Use appropriate courtesy titles (Ms., Miss, Mr., Mrs., Dr.)  
Check the spelling of each part of a person's name

### **Other**

Check for sentence fragments  
Check for run-on sentences  
Check for subject/verb agreement  
Check spelling  
Check punctuation  
Check capitalization

### **Excerpt from a Court Report...**

*Identify at least 5 errors in this report segment and circle them. Then add your own corrections below.*

Kenna Lewis has been in foster care since February 5, 2004. She seems really happy there. On my most recent visit, her foster mother said that Kenna enjoys finger-painting. This seems to be a wonderful foster home. They have another child also.

Mrs. Lewis has failed to attend recommended treatment for drugs and mental illness. When I met Mom, she kept talking about herself. I've never met a person so preoccupied with her own needs. She was confused about her children, but loves them. She says she tries to get to visits but can't always make it because of the bus schedule and she doesn't drive. She said that the agency service plan is too hard to do all at once. She has some major hurdles to overcome.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Paint A Picture With Words...

Instead of “The mother/child visit went poorly.” you tell the court...

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Instead of “Dad was acting angry and irrational with Tony.” you tell the court...

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Connect The Dots...

Instead of “Dad has been convicted of meth use so he should not have his children back.” you tell the court...

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Instead of “Mom is mentally ill and can’t take care of her children.” you tell the court...

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